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ABSTRACT

The Calista Elders Council (CEC) is a nonprofit organization representing the 1,330 Yup'ik elders 65 and older in the Alaskan Yup'ik homeland. The CEC seeks to preserve and transmit Yup'ik values and traditions through a five-fold plan that includes youth culture camps. An old summer fishing camp on Nelson Island became the site of a youth culture camp. The CEC pushed for this camp because of the decline in welfare services and the need for youth to know how to live as people did in the past, without relying on the cash economy. During the day, campers learned traditional subsistence activities. Evenings were reserved for "elder time." The culture camp provided a modern means for the traditional training of young people to be good listeners and, in their turn, become speakers of truth. The emphasis on talk reflects the indigenous view of how young people should learn and elders teach. Elders presented instruction in group settings and engaged in serious moral discourse dealing with appropriate behavior. Their long descriptions contained vivid metaphors to help young people retain what they said. Instead of individual qualities, the elders emphasized the importance of ongoing relationships. Elders did not just talk about Yup'ik culture, but displayed their unique view of the world in all they said and did. They addressed not only what young people needed to know, but also how they were expected to learn it. The elders taught youngsters how to learn. (TD)

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"Kenekngamceci Qanrutamceci (We Talk to You Because We Love You)"

Yup'ik "Culturalism" at the Umkumiut Culture Camp

Ann Fienup-Riordan, text

Alice Reardon, translations

May 2001

"Tradition here consists of the distinctive ways the change proceeds."
Marshall Sahlins, "Sentimental Pessimism," p. 174

When I lived on Nelson Island in the late 1970s, I heard many stories about life at Umkumiut, a seasonal camp on the shores of Toksook Bay. Through the 1950s Umkumiut was occupied from mid-April, when families arrived by dog team from the winter village of Nightmute, through fishing in July, when they returned upriver by boat with their summer's harvest. The shallow bay discouraged passing ships from landing, and villagers' only contact with the outer world was when they walked over the top of Nelson Island to visit the store and attend Sunday mass at Tununak.

Umkumiut originally comprised a dozen sod houses strung out along the beach, including a larger sod structure--the men's house or qasgi--where men slept, worked, told stories, and enjoyed daily sweat baths. By the 1950s the qasgi was abandoned and the sod houses replaced with frame dwellings. In 1964 a number of enterprising Nightmute families established the village of Toksook Bay on high ground along the coast three miles to the east of Umkumiut, thus avoiding the arduous annual move between summer and winter villages. Since then, tundra mice had been Umkumiut's only summer residents except for a few Nightmute

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families who come to fish for herring and salmon in June.

Though still on the physical periphery of the Western World, Umkumiut has recently reemerged as a vital center of Yup'ik activity. This time, however, it is not fish people seek but nothing less than the preservation of Yup'ik culture. For ten days in June 2000 five elders--Paul and Martina John and Theresa Moses of Toksook Bay and Simeon and Anna Agnes of Nightmute--worked with twenty ten- to fourteen-year-olds from surrounding villages to teach them about Yup'ik ways of thought and life. This "culture camp," as it was called, was sponsored by the Calista Elders Council (CEC). Although a "new tradition," the camp proved to be a place where many past practices lost to contemporary village life were present in word and deed.

The Calista Elders Council

Thirty years ago I never heard the word "culture" used on Nelson Island. Today it is on everyone's lips. Conscious culture is the trademark of the new millennium on Nelson Island as elsewhere, requiring effort to preserve and reproduce past practices and defend them against assimilative pressures. In this struggle, as Sahlins (2000:196) points out, "the continuity of indigenous cultures consists in the specific ways they change."

Two years ago Mark John, eldest son of regional leader Paul John and a leader in his own right, took a job in Anchorage as director of the CEC. The council is a nonprofit organization representing the 1,330 Yup'ik elders sixty-five and older in the Yup'ik homeland. Under Mark's leadership CEC appointed a nine-person board of elders and hired small but dedicated staffs in Anchorage and Bethel. The board developed a five-fold plan of action to preserve and transmit Yup'ik values and traditions, including annual youth and elders conferences, regionwide dance festivals, a network of village representatives, a

series of bilingual publications, and the youth culture camps. Because of the potential of CEC's plan to contribute to both community health locally and arctic social science globally, the council has been successful in obtaining Association for Native American (ANA) and National Science Foundation (NSF) support for their work, and I work with them as part of the NSF project. Ironically, non-Native society originally worked vigorously to erase difference and assimilate indigenous others during most of the twentieth century, but today federal and state efforts materially support the new emphasis on differences.

The CEC's real power and authority rest with its board of elders. In many cases of cultural revival, younger men and women who champion "tradition" are often at odds with parents, who had "accommodated to the white man and internalized the latter's reproaches" (Sahlins 2000:198). In southwestern Alaska, tradition-bearing elders are truly leading the charge, as they have retained both knowledge of their past and a passionate desire to communicate it. For them, as for indigenous leaders elsewhere, "culture is not only a heritage, it is a project," a demand for specific forms of modernity that are only possible if the next generation shares their view of the world, that is, their culture (Sahlins 2000:200).

Much has changed in the last forty years, but contemporary Yup'ik elders especially retain a sense of Yup'ik distinctiveness. These men and women, born in the first decades of the twentieth century, were the last generation raised in the gasgit and sod houses. How do they define themselves? What are some of the uniquely Yup'ik ways of viewing the world that they hope to communicate to their young people, and, as important, how do they want this communication to occur?

Culture Camp: "We Talk to You Because We Love You"

The following pages examine the Umkumiut culture camp as CEC's first, and to date most successful, effort to create a context in which elders can communicate their sense of Yup'ik distinctiveness to young people. I attended the camp not as an outside researcher, but as a mentor to help CEC staff record what their elders had to say, and this paper presents some of what I learned. One might account for the elders' words as part of the Yup'ik search for identity, but such a quest did not motivate the specific form they took or precisely what was being said. To understand these things, we need to explore the camp's properties, not its effects (e.g. Sahlins 1999:407). As Little Richard put it so well, "There was a whole lot of talkin' goin' on." What were the elders trying to say?

The Umkumiut camp was unlike any I had ever attended---no evening taps or morning reveille, no regular wakeup time, mealtime, or bedtime, no songs, skits, lanyards, or campfires in the dark, not even any dark to have campfires in. Instead structure flowed from the seasonal cycle of activities. We rose with the tide and moved with the weather. On a calm morning we were up early, and half the campers left by boat to dig clams, check nets, or gather herring eggs from the shore. The others helped the elders with activities around camp, including preparing seal gut, stringing nets, cutting fish, and braiding herring for drying.

Unusually good weather allowed many opportunities for campers to explore the tundra and shallow waters of the Bering Sea coast. Regardless of how busy the days, evenings were reserved for "elder time"--an hour or more during which the young people sat in a circle on the floor of the small, frame church we were using as the girl's dormitory and listened to the elders. The warm, dark room with high windows letting in evening light resonated with the original context

of such oratory--the qasqi. The elders spoke in Yup'ik, which Alice Reardan and Charlene Bosco took turns translating for the handful of students who were not fluent in their native language.

Living at Umkumiut for the first time in thirty-five years was tremendously evocative for elders. Walking in the tall grass by the shore or sitting by the fishracks looking out at the Bering Sea deluged elders with a flood of memories. The first two evenings elders described their experiences at Umkumiut and entertained the young people with "ghost stories" of the extraordinary beings inhabiting the landscape. They also remembered the many babies buried on the hillside. Late one afternoon, drinking tea in one of the small houses, Martina commented on how quiet life had been here in the past, lacking even the sound of children playing as work was constant and families were small.

Moving beyond reminiscences, elders began to seriously talk to the young people about why they were there and what they hoped they would learn. Simeon began:

> Today we have come here to camp at Umkumiut...for the purpose of learning about our way of life, about Yup'ik ways, about how they tried to live and how a man provided for himself. We came here to be speakers because we wanted you to know about those things, neqaqarkiurluci [to give you advice to remember later on in life]....You might forget what you were told, but someday it will appear in your minds when you become adults.

Theresa Moses echoed his emphasis on talk: "We are supposed to instruct you if we have the knowledge, to talk to you...about the lives you will live." Theresa stressed that explanations should be kept short and simple: "You know, our children don't understand some things." Simeon agreed: "Some of these people here do not comprehend what we are saying at all....Some have not been spoken to

in this manner." Nevertheless, the youngsters were still expected to be responsible for their own learning. According to Paul John, "Another person can't learn for you, but we should try to learn ourselves from what we heard and try to be attentive as we learn." As Theresa said, "We are in charge of our own lives."

The elders made it clear from the beginning that the purpose of camp was far from academic. Their goal was nothing less than to teach the Yup'ik way of life so that these young people would never lack for food in the future. According to Paul, a CEC board member:

> As we were raising funds for these camps for you to attend, we discussed the fact that when we first became aware of our surroundings, fish was our only means of living. This was before welfare and before there were food stamps, when fish was the only thing available. We wanted to raise funds for the purpose of teaching the young people about nerangnaqsaraq [subsistence, literally, "trying to find something to eat, seeking sustenance"].
>
> And it has become a reality. We raised money. And earlier, they spoke about the importance of subsisting. Indeed...subsistence is a source of great wealth to us Yupiit. Even though one has no money, if they have stored foods, it is as though one has a lot of money. One will eat when hungry; their means of support is not cut off, but it is like that person is wealthy....Because that is what a subsistence lifestyle provides, the council wanted you to learn about it here in these camps. And those who have spoken before have told you the truth. They learned this from their elders, and they have told us what they have experienced in their lives; the things they told us are very true.
>
> Now those people who have given welfare have said that...this source

of money is going to run out. When welfare is no longer available...people will have to return to the subsistence way of life. Those who have jobs among the kass'at [non-Natives] will continue to eat kass'aq food, but a person who doesn't have a job, if they don't try to subsist and take care of food, they will have none.

Paul concluded, "Kenekngamceci qanrutamceci [We talk to you because we love you], that is why we are giving you wonderful young people advice."

Having explained the purpose and truth of their words and the loving spirit in which they were given, they went on to emphasize how important it was for young people to listen to what they had to say. Using a traditional adage, Paul stated:

> Back when our ancestors constantly taught their young people in this manner, they used to say ayuqekusngatullruit qanmeng iluatni uitalrianun [it was like they were inside their mouth]....It was because they were adhering to what that person told them. And then the opposite. If a person does not listen...they said to that young person, "Tang elpet keqqutma akuliitqqun anqatalriate [It appears that you are going to slip out between the spaces in my teeth]."...That is what they used to tell them; a person who adhered would be likened to staying inside the mouth, but the one who was not cooperating even though they were disciplined, one who did not adhere was told that they were going out between the spaces in their teeth.

Elders Spoke and Young People Listened

Not surprisingly, the first topic our elders addressed was how children were talked to in the past. Parents then were never quiet. According to Simeon, "Our parents' qanruyutet [words, teachings] were true, and they were never quiet

towards young girls and young men who they wanted to encourage....They were always talking, always disciplining young boys and girls. They always spoke to those who they didn't want to see heading in the wrong direction in their lives. But they said that some men would not discipline others, but only discipline their own children. That is how those qanruciiyuilnguut [people who did not discipline others] were."

Paul added that in the past, elders really wanted their listeners to pay attention: "When someone interrupted while there was a speaker, they would direct their attention to us and say, 'Hey you, you poor thing, you aren't listening!' Apparently, they really wanted us to learn and loved us a great deal."

In rich, metaphoric language, Theresa Moses elaborated the importance of listening to one's parents:

> I am going to tell you a story. You all have mothers and fathers. When you go home, follow your mother's inerquutet [admonishments]. To lose a mother is very depressing and lonesome....Those of you who have mothers, if they admonish you about not taking the wrong path, try to listen to them, listen also to your fathers....What will you do when they pass away? If you do not learn how to do things, how will you live?...
>
> When parents die, it is like they leave with everything that you own....Those things that used to appear are lost. And even though we mothers try to do things with our sons, the things that our father took from the water and brought home are lost....
>
> And when we behave in a bad way, our parents get embarrassed if they hear....You should listen to your mothers and have respect for them, try to follow what they said. And when they die, if you want to do something after they pass on, you can't.

Theresa added that some young people do not want to listen because they think speakers are talking specifically about them:

> When some girls or boys hear people talking about proper behavior, they don't want to listen because it seems like they are actually talking about their behavior. That is what I used to do. When a woman would come in and talk, it seemed like they were directing it to me. When she would leave, I would ask, "Who talked about me?" And before my mother died, she told me that if I go to other villages...I would think that somebody was gossiping about me if I hadn't given up my bad behavior.

Simeon also emphasized the importance of good listening: "This is the first time we are doing something like this here at Umkumiut....When you return home your parents will ask you, 'What did they speak to you about at Umkumiut?'...If you hold onto and put away this qaneryaraq [saying], this ayuqucirtuun [instruction],...you will take it back to your villages. Only if you pay close attention while you are listening."

Instructions in the Past: What Elders Had to Say

After establishing the importance of good talking and good listening, the elders began to elaborate on what they were told when they were young. Paul described how he was instructed not to "follow his laziness":

> When they talked to us boys about our lives up to the point where we would have wives, they used to tell us, "If you live by following your laziness and do not try to obtain things,...if you happen to get a partner, you will only contribute to finishing the food of your in-laws....
>
> And when listening to those who were speaking to girls...."If they made a mistake by looking at your [pretty] face and they married you for that reason, if you don't work, your husband's family will say to you,

'Bring her back to her family because she doesn't do anything.'"...

And then they would give us an opposite scenario...."If you tried to obtain food by staying busy, your in-laws will hold you more dear than their own children, loving you and wanting you to be their in-law. And when a girl becomes a daughter-in-law, also, if they do not sit still,...she would be no different....They would consider her more dear than their own children."

Speaking on laziness, Theresa Anthony (a visitor from Nightmute) added, "Being lazy is no good. When someone had to ask us to perform a task, we felt bad all of a sudden." Conversely, Simeon described how people's activity could "wake up" their partners and cause them to succeed: "And a man might be a nukalpiaq [good hunter] and would catch everything....When he gets a partner, if the wife does not pay attention to his catch, that man will start to hunt without catching anything. Some of these girls here can wake up their husbands....If she takes good care of the game her husband caught, she will encourage her husband's hunting skills."

Anna Agnes described how, in the past, girls were talked to about men's work: "Even though we were females, they talked to us about topics that pertained to boys. And they brought to our attention that everything that was to be caught comes from the water....Even if they were women, they told them about the qanruyuutet and did not exclude them just because they were females." Paul noted that the same was true of boys and that today he still helps his wife with "women's work."

Theresa Moses also recalled being advised not to talk back or act on her anger: "They admonished us like this, 'If a person confronts you and even though you get hurt, do not talk back to them.'...They call that person gen'ngailnguq [one who does not get mad easily or act in anger]. Even though he gets mad, he

tries to remain calm, holding back what he has to say."

Following their elders' admonishments was particularly important, as young people were taught that what they did and said would come back to them. Paul described how animals would make themselves available to those who helped others: "It is a ganruyun that if we always helped orphans and are capable of providing food for ourselves, there will be more chance that game animals will make themselves available to us; it is like the help we gave them returns to us." Theresa made the same point in her description of how people should act if they encountered nonhuman persons known as egacuayiit:

> These egacuayiit were visible to people, and they appeared to be extremely poor....The parents warned those who encountered them not to belittle them, but to pretend to envy them for having more belongings....That egacuayaaq would talk back if they had envied him, saying, "Elpet tauquam, elpet tauquam [But you, but you]."...If treated like they were poor, they would answer in the same way, "But you, but you." They believed that how they treated the egacuayiit would determine their own fate. This was when the land was thin.

Both admonitions related to the power of the human mind. Again, according to Theresa Moses:

> Umyuqaa-qquq tukniluuni [They said that their minds were powerful]....They told us that a person's feeling of happiness is powerful, and their hurtful feelings are also powerful. If we cause that poor person to have hurtful feelings,...it is like they can shove us into negative circumstances. But if that person is happy, it is like they are pushing us towards our own happiness; they make things [all animals] more available to men, and every time he travels, there is something available.

Speaking from Experience

Along with recounting what they were told when they were young, our speakers--all parents themselves--eloquently described the way they had talked to their own children. All agreed that women were the primary caretakers of young children, constantly watching over them and teaching them. Martina spoke of raising her children as though they were not her own because she viewed them as a gift from God:

> We raised our children by being fearful over them, like they weren't our own children....And we were also aware that we might be criticized if we did not take care of them well....I was also constantly fearful that they might experience something bad. I raised my children like they weren't my own, always being afraid for them, because they were given to me by God to raise....
>
> And when it was time for them to go off to high school, I used to alerquq [advise] them thoroughly to always try to do good.

Theresa described again how women were told to always talk to their children, even when breast-feeding them, to behave in an appropriate manner:

> We used to inerquq them. And when they were going outside, we used to tell them, "If your peers pick on you, leave them, do not react back to them."...And when [children] cried and wanted us to feel sorry for them, they used to admonish us not to feel sorry for them....but to say to them, "If you had left them, you would not be crying." That was the most important advice we gave them.
>
> If we have children, even though we are breast-feeding them, always speak to them to behave in an appropriate manner. We always inerquq them to listen all day, to live by cooperating. Those are the alerquutet [prescriptions] they told us back then....

And when they grew older, if a person is in a desperate situation trying to do something, help them. That person will be happy, and a person's happiness is powerful. And also their hurt feelings are powerful....That is what we said to our children.

Evening talks were serious in both tone and content, but they always ended on a positive note. Sometimes they closed in prayer, sometimes with Yup'ik drumming and dancing, and sometimes with well-timed comic relief. For example, Paul closed one particularly long session, focused on the importance of listening to one's parents, with sobering advice on the abuse of inhalants by young people. Mirroring the short, humorous "support anecdotes" some Yup'ik orators used to follow qulirat (traditional tales) in the past, he added some unusual advice that left his audience laughing:

> Two months ago, I was at a statewide conference in Anchorage....They were speaking about the different things that can cause a person's mind to break, especially about inhalant abuse....You young people are very lovable, and your minds should not be ruined inside your heads....Some young people today...lose some of their wonderful minds...Though you see others who are abusing inhalants, do not follow them.
>
> And I want to finish off with this. There were two men. They used to have a lot of fun with each other, and I used to see them, also. After being gone during the wintertime, arriving after they had left together, his ilug [cousin] was laughing a lot. While his ilug was speaking, he farted, but ended up shitting in his pants and walked away with his legs spread apart. I am thankful that you have listened well. But don't accidentally shit when you fart.

One Can't Learn Just by Hearing

Along with the elders' emphasis on good listening and careful attention to the instructions they received, they also encouraged young people to carefully observe and participate in all camp activities. Speaking on the use of imarnit (seal-gut rain parkas), Paul observed: "Even if we say that this is how we used to make imarnit, you will not learn how to sew them. But if [my wife, Martina] shows you by letting you observe and telling you how they used to sew them, you will learn."

Commenting on the various harvesting activities the young people had participated in at Umkumiut, Simeon made the same point:

> Lately the young men have been going out fishing....Mark has been bringing you to the wilderness, down there to nuugnun [_____], bringing you fishing to give you things to remember later on in your lives.
>
> Also these girls are cutting fish....Some girls do not know how to cut fish because they haven't done it before. But they have taught you today by letting you cut fish. You will not always be young. Watch those people who are cutting fish down there and help them....You will remember what you learned.

Theresa also emphasized that learning was the product of experience, as if one were constantly going to school:

> Try to learn to do things when you are instructed by those who are trying to teach you....It is better to try to learn things, helping a man when you boys see him working....And when you grow older, remember those people you helped, remember the things you learned from that particular man.
>
> Girls would do the same with the women who they help....We are going to school every day, living with our relatives and learning about how to do things.

Reacting to Anna's statement that she had no formal schooling, Martina was even more adamant:

> She is lying when she says that we did not go to school. We were schooled in our _piciryarat_ [Yup'ik ways of working]. We started working when we were younger than you. We watched our parents and worked alongside them. We did not play....
>
> They used to give us tasks, tell us to make _pilugut_ [skin boots]. They used to cut the patterns for us and let us sew them. And when they quit cutting patterns for us, they told us to try ourselves. And even when we asked them, "How do you do this?" they told us to pay attention to our work and continue, and they did not show us how to do it again....It was like going to school about our Yup'ik ways....When we spent summers here, we used to really help our parents, learning how to prepare seals and skin them even though we didn't know how to do it at first....
>
> When we moved into other houses after we got married, after we got a partner, we worked on our husband's catches, knowing how to work on them. It is because it was our first priority to learn how to work. And it was very embarrassing to ask for help from our mothers....
>
> And today you do not know how to work because you are not taught about Yup'ik ways, only _kass'aq_ ways. And today, everything that you are wearing is made by _kass'at_....You are not wearing Yup'ik clothing...that you made yourselves....If the _kass'at_ didn't make you these things, how would you be living your lives not knowing how to work?

Paul and Simeon also discussed the "Yup'ik schooling" they had given their sons. Simeon spoke first:

> I have two sons now. I used to take them with me. When he was your age, I started bringing their older brother to the ocean, teaching him....I used

to alerqug them about dangerous situations, that they weren't supposed to do particular things because I wasn't always going to go with them....

And I am not the only one. My ilug [cousin] here taught his many sons how to work....He used to bring them over to Bristol Bay and have them help him when he fished, when the oldest sons were small. And now all of his children travel there because their father taught them.

Paul, in turn, commented on the situation at camp:

You see boats down there these past few days [which represent] the piciryarat of men trying to subsist....And we see boats that are carrying boys. That is an example of a man who is starting to teach his children....

Sometimes, even though the boy is having a hard time and is using all his strength, we let him handle it if he wants to, thinking, "We will not always bring him. If he does it alone, he will remember how to do it." We let them learn like that, let him handle things that he can handle, like fishnets, things that we do yuilqumi [in the wilderness]. And not long after, because they have been handling what they used to see, they learn, and even though they are alone, they can accomplish that task because they handled it already.

With his usual astute sense of relationships Paul compared what his parents taught him to what young people were learning at the camp:

Back then, when we were the same age as these kids, even though they didn't call it camp, our parents taught us about the proper way of taking care of food just like we were going to a camp....These young people were the same age when they started to go fishing. And these girls are the same age as those girls who were taught how to take care of fish.

Paul advised the young people not only to listen, observe, and learn, but

to "steal" their parents tasks when they returned home, thus becoming a source of wealth.

> Today you have been hearing about the tasks of people working on their own....If they have a father, they could think, "Let me try to take over chores that my father has that I can complete myself." And today you all see people who are gathering wood for their stoves. If you have stoves that operate by burning wood, chop wood yourselves, stealing the task of chopping wood away from your father....Wa-qquq ataani caarkainek imuutun allurrluku, piciilluku [It is said that it is like he is stealing tasks away from his father, doing it for him]; that is what a person should try to do.
>
> And also if some of you girls understood, you will be willing to take over your mother's chores inside the house,...thinking, "I will steal these chores away from my mother."...If you do that, it is said that you are trying to reciprocate your mother's hard work....It is said that you should try to pay back the suffering you caused your parents when you were small....
>
> And back then, a child used to mean a source of wealth. When a person had a child, among our ancestors, there was a ganeryaraq that said they gained a tukuutmek [source of wealth]. It was because they could do what I just said; they were called tukuun [one with wealth] because the child would help them when that child became capable.

"Put What You Learn in Your Pockets"

As the camp drew to a close the elders expressed gratitude to the young people for being good listeners. Paul spoke to the point:

> You young people have been listening very well here, and I am thankful

that you have been listening attentively....You should use the alerquutet that you were given, things that you learned,...not letting your mind what some of us Yupiit call tuatequaleq in our language, not giving up on continuing to live good lives....

A person who is like that, never gives up even though they make mistakes, a person who tries to move on, has a saying in the piciryarat of our ancestors: Pallalriatun-qquq erenrem iliini ayuqenqramta, makluta ataam ciutmun-qquq tua-i pinertutaacimcetun, imkut qanruyuutelput aturluki elluarluta pinqnaquurqilta [Even though it seems like we fall on our faces some days, we should get up and try our best to move forward using our qanruyuutet to live good lives].

Simeon remarked on the improvement he saw in the attention they gave to what the elders had to say:

Back when we first began gathering like this, you did not do very well, you were not attentive. And while we were speaking, it seemed as though you weren't even listening to someone speak as I was watching you....And today, you are very good, and when you are listening, I look at you and I am proud; you know that we sit in front of you and watch you....The fact that you are listening is greatly appreciated.

Theresa Moses encouraged the young people to put what they had learned in their pockets and take it home:

When you return home, if you forget the things that you learned here, it will be like you are leaving it behind. But it will be good if you always try to put away what you learned in your pockets because as you are living your lives, if you reach that situation they told you about, it will be like you are taking it out of your pockets, shaking it, and using it. That is what we are trying to have you do because we love you.

Evoking another vivid Yup'ik metaphor, Albertina Dull, a Nightmute elder recently arrived at Umkumiut to harvest herring, also complemented the young people on their good listening: "You have now learned about our Yup'ik caciryarat [way of life]. Some people learn things that they will never forget....They say ciutiin inqluakun anevkenaani [it never goes out their other ear?]."

Anna reminded the young people that this learning should not be confined to Umkumiut but was a lifelong process:

> You should learn like a person who is just going to be born for the first time....A person will not quit learning as they are living, they will always be learning. They will learn ganeryarat that they will live by. Kesianek elisaaralriatun yuuqatartuci [You will live your lives learning continuously].....And if you lived your lives without breaking your parents minds, you will be happy when you look back.

Finally, Paul reiterated the camp's primary purpose--to teach the young people about the subsistence way of life in an effort to arm them for an uncertain future in a changing world. They had come to Umkumiut to learn to work and to learn how to learn.

> You students came to this camp with the purpose of learning more about our subsistence way of life,...the most important aspect of our piciryarat. Even if a person is not suffering from a health problem, if they do not eat, they will become weak,...and they could end up dead....
>
> [The purpose of this camp] was to learn about how a person can work, and you have experienced a little of what it is like to work while living on one's own.
>
> Some of you who have been listening attentively also learned what these people who have been speaking to you have said. They have been

telling you that those of us who are your elders were in your situation once as young people. And when you become adults like us, they told you that you will be (reborn) living on your own....And because you have heard these things, you can think about them from now on....

Paul then restated what he had said at the camp's beginning--that CEC had pushed for this camp because of the decline in welfare and the need to know how to live as they did in the past, without relying on the cash economy:

When traveling to large cities, many different foods are inside the stores. A person who is hungry and has money can go inside and buy food....But you also see people who are going hungry outside....And many are homeless....

It has been our ancestors' way and has been passed on to us...that the only way to live has been from this land. They had no kass'aq things. They had no stove oil, no electricity, no machines, no food stamps, and no one received checks....

You need to be encouraged not to let our Yup'ik ways disappear but to live by them because we want you to start supporting yourselves and to know about the proper way of taking care of food.

They have been telling you lately that you will become like us, that you will be (reborn) when you separate from your parents...starting to live on your own....I am very thankful...You are going home richer with what you learned...because now you will remember what you heard.

The young people had heard a great deal about the power of words--to help, to harm, to teach--during the camp's ten days. Paul's final statement emphasized perhaps the most important feature of the words spoken at Umkumiut--their power to effect change.

This is the last speech. You students will return to your villages, and

when you arrive, your parents will observe and see that you are more willing to help...after listening to alerquutet here....Your parents will be proud of you and say, "After attending camp at Umkumiut, that person has come home with more of a willingness to help us."...But if some of you return home without changing, your parents will think, "This person has not changed, what purpose did they have in going to Umkumiut."...And even though we will not be watching you, those of us who have taught you things here will be even more proud of you.

"Culturalism" at Umkumiut

The Umkumiut experience mirrors "culturalism" worldwide. Used as a local fish camp in the past, it rose again as the regional site for a new way of talking about values that continue to animate the relationship between people, animals, and the land. The culture camp that took place there this summer clearly represents "a permutation of older forms and relationships made appropriate to novel situations" displaying, as Sahlins (1999:408-409) says so well, not the invention but the inventiveness of tradition.

Culture camp at Umkumiut provides a modern means for the traditional end of training young people to be good listeners and, in their turn, become speakers of truth. Campers arrived by plane wearing jeans and athletic shoes, not gut-skin parkas and seal-skin boots. They ate food from the store and traveled by motorboat, not kayak. But the emphasis on talk remained, reflecting an indigenous view of how young people should learn and elders teach. Grandparents, even more than parents, were an important source of moral instruction in the past. Contemporary village children, with hours devoted to school and sports, spend much less time in the presence of elders. Through CEC activities, some elders seek to reclaim that space and make their voices heard.

During evening sessions elders engaged in serious moral discourse dealing with appropriate behavior, including advice on marriage and parenting. Their long descriptions contained vivid metaphors to help young people hold onto what they said. They did not address the issue of identity in terms of individual qualities a person might possess, such as pride, intelligence, or wealth. Rather they emphasized the importance of ongoing relationships, including the way humans should relate to each other and to the animals on whom they relied.

Elders at camp presented instruction in group settings as was traditional, based on their own personal experience: "I tell what I know." Like good "afterologists" (Sahlin's (1999:404) term for postmodern, postcolonial, poststructuralist thinkers), they made no claims to completeness or to imparting the one true faith. Their sense of their own culture was neither essentialist nor bounded, and the emphasis was not on presenting a unified, homogeneous, systematic view (as in some instances of cultural revival and renewal). A number of authors exploring issues of identity emphasize people's stabilizing rhetoric, their attempts to forge "unity out of diversity" (Gellner 1987:10, 1983; Hiwasaki 1998). This, for the Yupiit, is not the issue. They are not among those indigenous people who talk about their culture in "the bounded, reified, essentialized, and timeless fashion that most [anthropologists] do now reject" (Brumann, in Sahlins 1999:403).

Elders meeting together to talk about their past describe their own experiences and listen to those of others. Knowledge is not the property of particular individuals (although any speaker is careful to acknowledge when he has heard something from someone else) but is a shared experience, gained in one's engagement with the world and with each other.

Basso (1996:7) notes that places become the "durable symbols of distant events, and indispensable tools for remembering and imagining them." Though the

elders required no such material model, the experience of returning to Umkumiut grounded everything they had to say. The Umkumiut church became "like a qasqi" when the elders and young people gathered there. The situation was similar in the Sakha Republic (Yakutia) where one of her guides reminded anthropologist Julie Cruikshank (2000:109), "It is impossible to think correctly about olonkho traditions without reference to where they took place--you need to go there."

The elders were not just talking about Yup'ik culture, but displaying their unique view of the world in all they said and did. They not only talked about what young people needed to know, but also addressed how they were expected to learn it. They were not just giving their listeners information about their culture, but the tools they needed to reproduce it. Elders taught youngsters nothing less than how to learn.

First and foremost, young people were expected to listen attentively while elders instructed them, giving them advice to remember later in life. Words, like fish, were to be stored for future use. Elders spoke with compassion from their own experience ("We talk to you because we love you"). They were not stingy with their words, but were expected to openly and continuously share what they knew. Young people were expected to listen, to "steal" their words, even if what they heard made them uncomfortable. They should adhere to what they were told, "staying inside the speaker's mouth, not slipping out between the spaces of the speaker's teeth."

Young people were taught that what they did would come back to them. They were taught that one's mind was powerful, and that the gratitude of those they helped would push them towards success as they continued to live. Conversely, elders admonished them never to talk back or act on their anger, so as not to injure another's mind.

Although the emphasis was on good listening and careful attention to the

instructions they received, the youngsters also were encouraged to carefully observe and participate in activities, "to handle what they could handle." They were expected to learn for themselves, trying what they were shown, not "following their laziness" but striving to "wake up" their partners and cause them to succeed. Like words, experiences should be "put in their pockets" and taken home for future use. Young people should not only listen, observe, and learn, but "steal" their parents tasks when they returned home, thus becoming a source of wealth. They should use the alerquutet they had been given, trying their best to move forward.

Finally, young people were reminded that this learning was a lifelong process: "You will live your lives learning continuously." They had come together at camp to learn how to work and to learn how to learn. Soon they would become like their parents, living on their own. Their experience at Umkumiut would help to prepare them for that life: "You are going home richer with what you learned...because you are able to remember what you heard." If the young people had paid attention to what they had heard, it could help them change their lives.

Both similarities and differences exist between what elders told young people at Umkumiut and information recorded in the 1980s concerning the education of children in the past. Then, children's activities were carefully regulated--talking, sleeping, eating, drinking, and moving around the village in the performance of daily tasks. A child awoke early, immediately checked the weather, worked hard without fear of dirt, and ate and drank carefully and in moderation. Through these acts children worked simultaneously to create a boundary between themselves and both illness and ill will and to clear a way to good hunting and good relationships with others. As at Umkumiut, children were taught that their actions, if performed according to the rules, created a

barrier to misfortune that led to future success. Regardless of their technical skill, if they failed to comply, illness and death rather than animals and offspring would come to them (Fienup-Riordan 1994:143-58).

In the past, one's senses were carefully restricted in the human world to allow success in one's dealings with animals. For example, when a young girl had here first menstruation, her body was covered, sight restricted, and her "bad air" carefully avoided so as not to contaminate hunters. Young men and women were admonished not to touch or even look at each other. Elders at Umkumiut had grown up practicing this rigorous separation. Though they referred to these rules and clearly still valued them, believing that many contemporary problems spring from ignoring them, they focused on the importance of learning from their elders to enrich their future lives. Words were still viewed as inherently powerful, capable of both help and harm. Elders encouraged young people to take responsibility for their actions and to use what they learned.

What were the young people's reaction to this strict, serious form of engagement? Most listened attentively. In his written comments about camp, Eugene Mark of Goodnews Bay wrote, "We listen very carefully to who is telling words. We have to listen to what they are saying. When we were in a big circle we were talking about how to be good." Debbie Kusaiak of Chefornak concluded thoughtfully, "I am thankful to the elders coming here and talking to us. Someday in the future we will be the ones talking to the younger generation."

At culture camp the elders publicly describe and discuss practices hidden from the view of a generation of younger Yupiit. Moreover, as an anthropologist, I am invited and encouraged to document, through cassette tape and camera. I am not viewed as the director of a National Science Foundation oral history project, but as a mentor whose primary job is, like the elder I am fast becoming, to keep listening and to pass on what I learn.

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